

## *WORK ZONE SAFETY TASK FORCE MEETING*

*June 23, 2004*

*Olympic Region Board Room, 9:00 a.m.*

### Welcome

Don Nelson welcomed the group and expressed his pleasure that this very successful group is continuing to meet. He stressed that the Work Zone Safety Task Force (WZSTF) has his full support, and is pleased it continues working towards minimizing work zones and protecting our employees.

### New Members

Kevin Dayton went through the new member list and explained briefly why each member had been chosen. In picking this group, Co-Chairs Kevin and Chris Christopher were looking for a balance of people from the field, headquarters and outside agencies; as well as regional equity; and expertise in particular areas.

Each quarterly meeting will take place in a different region, showcasing projects unique to that region. The next meeting will take place in Vancouver on September 23 at the WSDOT Region Office.

### History

The history of the WZSTF was reviewed. The task force was created in 1993 following the tragic death of WSDOT worker Mike Malone who was hit by a drunk driver on I-5. The task force was chartered to look at safety issues. They created eight work zone safety elements (such as worker protection and operating procedures) and 28 recommendations (including high visibility clothing, innovative use of devices and public education). The legislature allotted \$2.7 M for safety and from that came double fines in work zones, traffic safety requirements in contracts, barrier requirements, and public ad campaigns to educate the public about work zones. The WZSTF also was able to get a limited amount of information into the Department of Licensing Driver's Guide, including work zone information on the previously blank back cover. Recently, Secretary Doug MacDonald wrote to the director of DOL requesting a section of the Driver's Guide be dedicated to work zone safety.

### Demonstration

The WZSTF was able to watch the demonstration of a new device. Designed by the California Department of Transportation, the Balsi Beam is a mobile work zone protection device designed to protect workers involved in highway maintenance work. The device is designed to be towed by a standard truck tractor to the work site at normal highway speeds. The device has two main longitudinal beams operated hydraulically; set up and deployment only take about five minutes each. The beam creates a protected work zone of 30 feet. It has been crash tested at NCHRP Test Level 2 and meets the NCHRP 350 criteria for angle impacts. Discussion on the device after the demonstration included the belief that a truck mounted attenuator would need to be present, but that it may have some application for bridges and areas where any crashes into the device wouldn't exceed 45 mph.

### Goals of the New Team

The task force talked about what impact this group has. The task force is intended to be a forum for discussion and a market for successes; it will create consistency between regions; educate others as to the value of safety; and integrate ideas into programs, procedures and manuals. The group talked about the six goals Kevin and Chris created and added a seventh bullet, Communication and Education. The quarterly meetings will allow each region to showcase projects unique to that region. The WSP commander from each local district has agreed to attend. There is an emphasis on sharing state of the art practices. The task force will provide guidance and pass issues on to the right policy makers. The task force with its wealth of expertise will be a sounding board for new policies and will brainstorm unique projects. Feedback from the group acknowledged the newly configured task force seems to be on track and will accomplish even more. Concern was expressed that good ideas could get lost if there is no formal process to carry the ideas to the people who can implement them. The right people need to be involved so that traffic and design ideas are incorporated. **An action item list with timelines will be created at the end of every meeting.**

### Expectations

- Attendance is a must in order to keep continuity
- Communication is necessary, both for each member to speak for their region and for their discipline on issues and ideas that arise, and for each member to communicate to their region and to their discipline about what we are doing.
- Come prepared to participate

### Current Activities

Frank Newboles presented twelve ongoing activities from the previous WZSTF. The task force discussed the issues and decided which ones are worth pursuing, which ones the task force has done what they can, and which ones should be given to others to complete. Kevin and Chris stressed only issues that fit within the current seven goals of the new task force will be considered at future meetings. A summary is listed below:

#### Supplemental Notice of Proposed Rule Making (SNPRM) on work zones

*No more feedback is needed from WSDOT, Frank and Kevin will introduce as an agenda item when the rule becomes final.*

#### Short Duration Work Zones

*This issue is being handled by the Traffic Office and L&I – new guidance is being included into the Traffic Control Guidelines – Frank will give a report at the September meeting.*

#### Lump Sum Traffic Control Specifications

*This will be done in August and presented to the task force at the September meeting.*

#### DOL Drivers Guide

*If Doug MacDonald's request is granted, an entire section on work zones will be included in the guide. The new guide will be distributed to the WZSTF members when it becomes available.*

#### Work Zone Safety Compliance - Utilities, Developers, Others

*A letter will be sent from the WZSTF co-chairs to the state utility engineer asking for assistance in supporting compliance through the use of dedicated utility inspectors and work zone requirements as well as approvals in the franchise and permit process.*

#### Work Zone Web Page

*Lisa Murdock & Marty Weed will work on the web page, updates will be presented to the WZSTF as they become available.*

#### WSP Work Zone Enforcement & Assistance

*The procedures will be finalized and the committee will be updated with the new traffic manual guidance that addresses this issue.*

#### Work Zone Safety “Stand Down”

*Rex Swartz will develop "How to Conduct a Stand Down" for inclusion on the WZSTF web page.*

#### Work Zone Conference

*There will not be a conference this year. Whether or not to have a conference in 2005 will be discussed at further meetings.*

#### Work Zone Drivers Education Program

*This information is on the web, Lisa Murdock will contact driver education instructors with updated information about the work zone drivers ed program.*

#### Give’Em a Brake Program

*Lisa Murdock is now handling this program and will be giving it a higher profile.*

#### Worker Safety Paving Policy

*This one is done, a memo has been sent to the regions with recommendations as to a safe paving operation.*

#### Dump Truck Backing Regulations

The Washington State Department of Labor and Industries issued an emergency rule May 5 that requires in addition to the back-up alarm: dump-truck drivers must have either an observer signaling when it is safe to back up or an operable mechanical device like a video camera that provides a full view of the area behind the dump truck. This is in response to 17 work zone fatalities within the last four years, six of which were caused by dump trucks backing up. L&I will have a special emphasis this summer on compliance inspections on road construction sites, especially looking at traffic control and hearing conservation. Road construction workers have the highest rate of hearing loss claims in construction, yet this is 100 percent preventable. Word needs to get out to the field on this emphasis. L&I has requested a list of all WSDOT projects and is offering to have a consultant visit the site and let crews know if there are any practices that could result in a citation.

#### Region Round Table

*North Central Region* – Kirk Berg talked about an accident where a contractor’s forklift tipped over and rolled down a hill, killing the driver and coming close to hitting a WSDOT transportation engineer. After witnessing the death of the forklift operator, the engineer was required to take trauma counseling. WSDOT policy is to recommend trauma counseling, but most regions make it mandatory to remove any stigma.

A successful method that has been used to control the length and delay of the pilot car queue is to pay for a second pilot or chase car to establish the end of the pilot queue as it is proceeding into the work zone. Those drivers “racing to catch the queue” will be controlled and forced to stop at the flagger station and wait for the next pilot car. This method also helps the flagger gauge a maximum 20-minute delay time for the piloted traffic.

NC Region uses variable speed zones on two-way roadways and moves the speed zone with the operation, it is more effective than a permanent speed reduction sign and the WSP will enforce it. WSDOT has a traffic control plan for this. The group discussed adjusting the WAC or RCW that mandates putting a legal notice in the newspapers vs. creating a variable speed zone. **Frank will research this and report his findings to the group.**

*Northwest Region* – Pat Moylan talked about an Incident Response Vehicle that was hit by a bus. The IR vehicle had pulled out into the HOV lane with it's arrow sign flashing so that the tow truck at the scene of an accident could get to one of the vehicles on the shoulder. A bus swerved at the last minute but still hit the IR vehicle at an angle and was still traveling about 55 mph. The IR vehicle in turn struck a truck, which hit a car, and the IR vehicle ended up against the guardrail. No one was seriously injured. In critiquing the event, the people involved brainstormed better ways to do the same thing without putting either the tow truck or the IR vehicle in traffic.

Phil Fordyce told the group about a worker bent over doing core testing at night in a work zone, when he was backed over by a work zone truck. The core tester was seriously injured; he has long-term issues and is currently in a nursing home. In looking at how things could have been done differently, several things came to light including a specific coring activity policy, requiring chocks behind the wheel of all parked vehicles which requires the driver to look behind the truck before getting back into it, a visual spotter in addition to an audible alarm, white coveralls instead of just a reflective vest, and adequate lighting (no light was shining on the bent over worker even though he had them on his truck). Although WSDOT has a backing up policy, NW Region is creating a more stringent policy for backing, similar to the ones created by SW and Eastern Regions, which include not backing up until there has been a visual safety check. The task force discussed backing issues as some length. Next year OFM will require all drivers that drive over 1000 miles a month to take training, the curriculum is still being determined.

*South Central Region* – Tom Root said he is a big advocate of daily morning safety meetings, they can be used to review near accidents and corrections are made on the spot. Rick Gifford also praised his region's daily safety meetings. Rick talked about lessons learned when creating a merge lane outside of Vantage that ended up causing back up because it was too close to a rest area that was also merging out onto I90.

*Eastern Region* – Ralph Robertson said that the key element to worker safety is eliminating the risk to people. He believes that one of the most dangerous yet least necessary jobs is the ticket taker on asphalt paving jobs; he feels there should be a way around this federal regulation.

*Olympic Region* – several people from the region talked about worker safety and the need to build safe havens for workers on sites. They feel that total closures make more sense than working nights when cars are moving faster and visibility is less. Sue Babic told the group about a successful five-mile lane closure they had several years ago where 13 different crews (signing, patching, signals and more) worked within the zone. Sue also talked about the hands on work zone training class Olympic Region developed that they are now teaching to other regions.

*Wilder Construction* – Kathleen Salamon expressed frustration concerning their limitation to changing speed limits, and with the inconsistency among regions.

*Lakeside Industries* – Mike O’Neil also is concerned about not being able to change speed limits in a paving project. Marty Weed and Frank Newboles are rewriting the criteria that clarify ways to safely control traffic without having to reduce the speed. Speed reduction can be ineffective without law enforcement.

#### Hard Hat Policy

Rex Swartz spoke briefly on the hardhat policy and the disconnect that WSDOT and L&I seem to have with it. **Rex Swartz will set up a meeting with the appropriate L&I staff.**

#### Building the Next Agenda

- Vehicle lighting standards (this standard will go out with the next agenda so task force members can come prepared to discuss) – Rex Swartz
- Region roundtable – All
- WSP guidelines/consistency issue
- Work Zone Self Assessment/looking at points that need to be pursued
- WZSTF subcommittees – Frank Newboles & Rex Swartz
- Frank’s statewide tour outcome – Frank
- Short duration work zones – Frank
- WZSTF webpage and the Give ‘Em a Break Program – Lisa Murdock
- Variable speed zone policy – Frank
- Reoccurring work zone issues – Frank
- Lump Sum Traffic Control Specifications –Ron Howard
- RC Flagman presentation and demo – Frank & Sue Babic
- 2003 MUTCD Part VI, adoption, modifications, highlights
- Rewrite of Standard Specifications 8-23 Temporary Pavement markings – Frank
- Report to Gummada on work zone ITS priorities at WSDOT – Frank
- SR500 presentation by SWR
- SafeGuard link system, (alternative to Balsi Beam) – Frank & Vendor

The meeting adjourned at 3:20 p.m.